

Message Text

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INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USUN NEW YORK

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

DIA WASHDC

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BEIRUT FOR VOA AND RAPA

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SUBJ: MEDIA REACTION (33/74) - PRESS REVIEW FEB 20

SUMMARY: DEFMIN DAYAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO SERVE IN NEXT GOVERNMENT ACCENTUATED INTER-PARTY CONFLICT IN ALIGNMENT. DAYAN AND HIS ASSOCIATES INTIMATED THAT LACK OF PARTY SUPPORT SPURRED DECISION. PRIME MINISTER MEIR AND OTHER ALIGNMENT MEMBERS PUBLICLY EXPRESSED HOPE THAT DECISION IS NOT FINAL. AFTERNOON PRESS REPORTS MRS MEIR IS UNCLASSIFIED

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MEETING DAYAN THIS MORNING TO REVERSE DECISION.

WITH EXPIRY OF 21-DAY PERIOD, PRIME MINISTER IS SCHEDULED TO MEET PRESIDENT KATZIR THIS AFTERNOON TO REPORT ON OUTCOME OF HER EFFORTS TO FORM GOI. PARLIAMENTARY WRITERS ALLUDE TO POSSIBILITY THAT ALIGNMENT-INDEPENDENT LIBERALS-NRP COALITION WILL SOON BE FORMED. PRESIDENT NIXON'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF SECRETARY'S TRIP TO AREA NEXT WEEK RECEIVES HEAVY MEDIA COVERAGE. MOST COMMENTATORS TAKE THIS TO INDICATE THAT SECRETARY HAS REASON TO BELIEVE IN SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF MISSION. REPORTS FROM JERUSALEM AND WASHINGTON SUGGEST SECRETARY WILL RECEIVE LIST OF POWS WHEN HE ARRIVES IN SYRIA ON TUESDAY. SOME POLITICAL WRITERS REFLECT CONCERN THAT WASHINGTON WILL PRESS ISRAEL TO CONCEDE TERRITORIES TO SYRIA OUTSIDE FRAMEWORK OF ARRANGEMENT THAT WOULD LEAD TO TOTAL PEACE SETTLEMENT. MAARIV (DAN) REPORTS ON ACCUMULATING SUSPICION IN JERUSALEM THAT SADAT WILL EXPLOIT ISSUE OF USE OF AN ALREADY REOPENED CANAL AS POLITICAL WEAPON TO SEEK TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM SINAI. END SUMMARY.

DEFENSE MINISTER DAYAN

DEFMIN DAYAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE DOES NOT INTEND TO SERVE IN NEXT GOI GAVE RISE TO VARIOUS SPECULATION ON: (1) REASONS BEHIND HIS DECISION, (2) DAYAN'S LONG-RANGE POLITICAL INTENTIONS, AND (3) IMPACT OF HIS DECISION ON STRENGTH OF HIS PARTY AND ON PROCESS OF FORMING NEXT GOI. MOST ACCOUNTS ACCEPT PROFERRED VIEW THAT DECISION STEMMED FROM DAYAN'S DISSATISFACTION WITH INTER-PARTY 'ANARCHY' AND THAT HE DECIDED TO CHALLENGE HIS OPPONENTS OPENLY. OTHERS SPECULATE THIS IS BEGINNING OF NEW POLITICAL LINE WHICH DAYAN INTENDS TO FOLLOW. AFTERNOON PRESS REPORTS MRS MEIR UNDERSTANDS DAYAN'S REASONS, AS SHE LIKEWISE IS DISSATISFIED WITH LACK OF PARTY DISCIPLINE.

NEXT COALITION GOVERNMENT

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT: (1) PM MEIR'S DECISION THAT SHE WILL NOT REQUEST AN EXTENTION OF 21-DAY PERIOD WHICH EXPIRES TODAY TO

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PURSUCE POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS TO FORM NEXT GOI, (2) OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN PROSPECTIVE COALITION PARTNERS, AND (3) DEVELOPMENTS THAT MIGHT FOLLOW DAYAN'S DECISION. NEVERTHELESS, MEDIA EXPRESS CONVICTION THAT NEXT GOI WILL SOON BE FORMED ALONG LINES OF OUTGOING COALITION (ALIGNMENT-INDEPENDENT LIBERALS-NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY).

KISSINGER; SYRIA AND ISRAEL

(A) DAVAR AND MAARIV REPORT THAT GOI HAS CONVENED TODAY TO DISCUSS RECENT DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING ISRAELI-SYRIAN NEGOTIATIONS AND EXPECTED ARRIVAL OF SECRETARY KISSINGER. MAARIV (HARIF) ADDS: "THE GOI HAS CONVENED TODAY ALSO TO DISCUSS A SECURITY SUBJECT THAT IS NOT CONNECTED WITH TROOP SEPARATION WITH SYRIA. AUTHORITATIVE CIRCLES IN JERUSALEM REFUSED TO DISCLOSE THE NATURE OF THIS SUBJECT...THE GOI HAS NOT YET DISCUSSED A TROOP SEPARATION PLAN WITH SYRIA...AND WILL DO SO IN ANTICIPATION OF KISSINGER'S ARRIVAL IN JERUSALEM..."

(B) HAARETZ (GOLAN) REPORTS: "SYRIA WILL DELIVER TO DR KISSINGER A LIST OF POWS WHEN HE ARRIVES IN DAMASCUS IN THE MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK--THIS OPINION WAS EXPRESSED BY SENIOR OBSERVERS IN JERUSALEM...KISSINGER WILL BRING THE LIST TOGETHER WITH THE SYRIAN PROPOSAL ON TROOP SEPARATION TO JERUSALEM...ISRAEL WILL SUBMIT ITS COUNTER-PROPOSAL WHICH KISSINGER WILL CARRY BACK TO SYRIA...THEREAFTER THE PROCESS WILL RESEMBLE THE ONE FOLLOWED DURING THE TROOP SEPARATION TALKS WITH EGYPT..."

(C) MAARIV (HARIF) COMMENTS: "...APPARENTLY ISRAEL HAS REASON TO FEAR TROOP SEPARATION TALKS HELD UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE OIL THREATS...(THIS) IN PRACTICE WOULD TRANSLATE INTO WITHDRAWAL FROM AREAS OCCUPIED IN THE YOM KIPPUR WAR BEFORE THE SYRIANS AGREE TO CONCLUDE AN INTERIM ARRANGEMENT AS A 'FIRST STEP TOWARD A FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENT,' SIMILAR TO THE TROOP SEPARATION AGREEMENT CONCLUDED WITH EGYPT. ANYWAY IT IS HARD FOR ISRAEL TO DETACH ITSELF...FROM THE FACT THAT WASHINGTON'S TERRITORIAL CONCEPT IS CLOSER TO THAT OF SYRIA AND EGYPT...AND MIGHT LEAD TO ISRAELI-US CONFRONTATION..."
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(D) DAVAR (TADMOR) COMMENTS: "...KISSINGER WILL NOT SURRENDER TO ARAB BLACKMAIL...HE WILL TRY TO SEPARATE THE POW ISSUE FROM THE TROOP SEPARATION TALKS...KISSINGER DID NOT PRESSURE ISRAEL ON THE SUBJECT OF POWS...HOWEVER, IT WAS RECENTLY CLARIFIED TO AMBASSADOR DINITZ THAT A COMPROMISE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS IS UNAVOIDABLE...KISSINGER DOES NOT SAY THIS OPENLY NOW...HE DOES NOT YET HAVE CARDS (FROM SYRIA) TO PLAY THE GAME...SYRIA'S POSITION IS TOO INTRANSIGENT AND ITS DEMANDS ARE TOO EXTREME... KISSINGER WILL CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS...INCLUDING LATENT PRESSURE TO SOFTEN ISRAEL'S POSITION (ON TERRITORIES)...THIS SIGNALS AN APPROACHING CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND KISSINGER...ISRAEL MUST STAND FIRM AGAINST ANY CONCESSIONS OUTSIDE OF PEACE ARRANGEMENTS...ISRAEL NEEDS FIRM LEADERSHIP AND PERHAPS TIME HAS COME TO CONSIDER A WIDE NATIONAL COALITION..."

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(E) HATZOFI REPORTS: "THE US REJECTED THE DEMANDS SUBMITTED BY THE EGYPTIAN AND SAUDI ARABIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS TO PROVIDE GUARANTEES THAT ISRAEL WITHDRAW FROM THE GOLAN HEIGHTS AS A CONDITION TO LIFTING THE OIL EMBARGO ON THE US. THIS TRANSPIRED FROM THE TALKS HELD BETWEEN SECRETARY KISSINGER AND AMBASSADOR DINITZ. IT SEEMS THE MINISTERS CARRIED PROPOSALS TO EASE THE EMBARGO BUT NOT TO ELIMINATE IT.

(F) PRESS CARRIED PRIME MINISTER MEIR'S ANSWER TO QUESTION FROM FLOOR BY LIKUD MEMBER DURING ZIONIST GENERAL COUNCIL TO EFFECT THAT SYRIA'S DEMAND TO RECOVER PART OF PRE-OCTOBER GOLAN HEIGHTS TERRITORY AS PART OF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT IS "IRRATIONAL." MRS MEIR SAID ISRAEL DOES NOT WISH TO REMAIN IN SYRIAN TERRITORIES ACQUIRED DURING YOM KIPPUR WAR AND IS READY TO EFFECT DISENGAGEMENT THERE. PM ADDED THAT CEDING PART OF PRE-1973 GOLAN HEIGHTS TO SYRIA WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO AWARING ASAD 'A BONUS FOR ATTACKING ISRAEL ON YOM KIPPUR."

SADAT'S AIMS

PRESS AND RADION DEVOTED MODERATE PLAY TO SADAT'S FEB 19 SPEECH. HAARETZ EDITORIAL SAYS TEST OF SADAT'S PEACE INTENTIONS RESTS IN PRACTICAL STEPS YET TO BE TAKEN AND NOT IN DECLARATION OF INTENT.

MAARIV (DAN) REPORTS: "EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT MIGHT USE AN (OPEN) CANAL AS A MEANS TO PRESSURE ISRAEL TO MAKE FURTHER CONCESSIONS AS PART OF THE EXPECTED POLITICAL STRUGGLE...RECENT INFORMATION REACHING JERUSALEM THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS IS NOT ENCOURAGING...SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH EGYPTIAN ANNOUNCEMENTS OF AN INTENTION TO CLEAR THE CANAL, OPEN IT FOR INTERNATIONAL NAVIGATION AND REHABILITATE CANAL VILLAGES...THERE ARE VARIOUS SIGNS INDICATING THAT SADAT HAS OTHER INTENTIONS REGARDING THE USE OF THE CANAL AS A POLITICAL WEAPON SIMILAR TO THE ARAB OIL...SADAT HAS BEEN VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE ARAB OIL EMBARGO...TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT HE IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF USING AN OPEN CANAL AS A WEAPON...IN SUCH AN EVENT, SADAT HOPES THE WEST WILL SHOW ITSELF AS INCAPABLE OF

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DEALING WITH THIS AFFAIR...AS (IT WAS INCAPABLE) OF HANDLING THE OIL EMBARGO...EGYPT WILL PERMIT SHIPS TO PASS THROUGH THE CANAL...IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS POLITICAL, MILITARY AND ECONOMIC NEEDS...EXPERTS BELIEVE SADAT'S DECISION TO BUILD CANAL VILLAGES STEMS FROM HIS BELIEF THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT DARE LAUNCH AN ATTACK ACROSS THE CANAL..." (33/74)

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